India-Canada Relations: An Analytical Study of the Impact of Canadian Immigration Policy Upon the Indian Diaspora (2015-2024)

SYNOPSIS

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State of the Art

India and Canada have long-standing bilateral relations that are based upon shared values of democracy, multiculturalism and economic engagement. Both countries have been part of the Commonwealth and have had people-to-people contact over a while. India and Canada established diplomatic relations soon after India attained independence in 1947. Both countries have a federal structure of government and features such as "federation with a strong Central government and giving of residuary powers to the Central government", were taken from the constitution of Canada and duly acknowledged and included in the Indian constitution.

In the early years of Indian independence, Canada was one of the largest contributors of foreign aid to India and also provided special assistance in areas such as education and technology. As India went through economic liberalization in the 1990s, the relationship expanded and encompassed new areas of trade and investment. However, relations were at loggerheads when India conducted a peaceful nuclear test in Pokhran in 1974. The relations between the two countries deteriorated again when Khalistani separatists blew up an Air India flight in 1985. Since then, India-Canada relations have never achieved its full potential. The relations have historically been complex and strained, characterized by periods of close collaboration and significant tension.

Indian diaspora constitutes a significant component of Canada's diverse demographic landscape, and various factors including economic opportunities, educational aspirations and family reunification shape it. Migration has always been a key aspect between these two countries since the British era. Over the past decades, Indian immigrants have played an instrumental role in shaping the bilateral relationship, with Indians contributing significantly to Canada's cultural fabric, economy and educational institutions. In recent years, Canada has become a top choice for Indian students and skilled professionals. Today, people of Indian descent form one of the largest immigrant groups in Canada.

Over the past few decades, Canada has established a reputation that values and welcomes new immigrants. For decades, Canada's immigration policies were mainly aimed at boosting its rapidly aging population, filling labor shortages and settling refugees on humanitarian grounds from war-torn nations. Canada has largely accommodated new immigrants and is considered a

global leader when it comes to refugee settlement. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in his election campaign emphasized heavily on immigration targets to stimulate economic growth and also prioritized permanent residents of skilled workers in sectors like construction, agriculture and healthcare. Meanwhile, a Pew Research report from 2019 showed that Canada had the most positive and favorable attitudes towards immigration out of the top ten migrant destination countries. Michael Donnelly, a professor at the University of Toronto, revealed to BBC that since the late 1990s, Canadian attitudes have been generally pro-immigration. Donnelly also stated that a significant portion of Canada's electorate is made up of immigrants, which prevents major political parties from taking an anti-immigration stance.

Migration between India and Canada can be traced to the late 19th century, when Indians, mostly from the Punjab, began arriving in the British Columbia region of Canada. The expansion of the British empire created conditions for many Indians to migrate to Canada, filling labor shortages in agriculture, forestry, steel, and railroad industries (Bhargava, 2010). In contemporary times, migration has gained importance with the development of modern means of transport, which is the main component of demographic change.

Review of Literature

1. **Ravenstein** in his book "**The Laws of Migration"** (1885) proposed a set of laws that studied the various factors that influence migration like industrialization, education and labor force. This theory elucidates that migration primarily occurs in stages, moving from rural areas to industrial towns, and then to bigger cities. Here the concept of gender patterns also comes into effect in which Ravenstein points out that females often migrate to shorter distances while males are more pro-active and are involved in international migration. Economic factors are the major causes of migration and most of the migrants are young adults who seek better wages and employment opportunities. Ravenstein further emphasized that migrants are more likely to move to areas with cultural and linguistic characteristics similar to their own.

2. **Nina Glick Schiller** in her work **"Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration" (1992)** introduces the concept of transnationalism in which she explains that the world is increasingly characterized by forces of globalization. Transnationalism refers to the increase in exchanges, social connections and practices of individuals and communities across national borders. She further argues that activity and identity are no longer limited to the borders of the nation-state. Rather, migrants adapt to a new society and their

identities are formed on a transnational scale. In this way, migrants maintain "dual" or "multiple" identities that link together host countries and motherland.

3. The theory of **complex interdependence** was proposed by **Joseph Nye** and **Robert Keohane** in their book **Power and Interdependence (1977).** This theory of international relations critiques the traditional realist perspective and emphasizes the idea that there are non-state actors and processes that realism mainly failed to recognize. The theory of complex interdependence recognizes that modern states have become more interdependent in this globalized world order but doesn't guarantee that their conflicts have been resolved. They have become more interdependent than ever before and the forces of globalization made them interact through channels other than formal diplomatic relations.

4. **Satwinder Kaur Bains** in her article **"A Century of Indian Migration to Canada: A Choreography of Challenges and Changes" (2024)** highlighted the early waves of Indian immigration to Canada. In the early 20th century, when Sikhs people mostly from the Punjab region began to reach the Canadian shores of British Columbia. These immigrants came with their hopes of financial prosperity and cultural acceptance. But they did not expect that they would encounter intense racism, discrimination and labor prejudice. From the very beginning, Sikh immigrants faced racist slurs from the dominant European-descended population, who aimed to maintain Canada as a land for the white population. Despite these difficulties, the Sikhs have carried along with them their "predefined social identity and language" to the new shores and established social, cultural and religious institutions similar to those that exist in their homeland.

5. **Ryan M. Touhey** in his article entitled **"The Canada-India Relationship: A Historical Understanding of Political Discontent and Diaspora" (2024)** illuminates the historical understanding of India-Canada relations right from the attainment of independence of India up to the present-day scenario. He observes that people-to-people linkages, trade and the presence of the diverse Indian diaspora have made the relationship more robust. During the first decade of bilateral relations, both countries worked closely with the United Nations for conflict resolution and peaceful settlement of the Korean War. Canada offered technical support and food aid to help New Delhi achieve its development goals. The two countries also indulged in sharing atomic and nuclear energy technology by building new reactors.

Relations took a downturn when India, during the regime of Indira Gandhi, conducted a peaceful nuclear test in Pokhran in 1974. In response, Canada froze all agricultural aid and halted nuclear

cooperation between the two sides. Since then, bilateral trade between two countries has been lukewarm and immigration levels in the early 1980s were consequently reported to be extremely low. At the international level, their views on the war in Ukraine have differed, with India professing its long-standing ties with Russia keeping in mind its oil requirement, while Canada seems to provide its firm support for Ukraine, both economically and politically.

6. **Rupa Banerjee** in her article entitled **"The Evolution of Indian Immigrants in Canada" (2024)** explored the immigration policy of Canada in the last 50 years. Canada's immigration policies in the early 20th century mainly discouraged Asian immigration and they faced significant discrimination and racism from the native population. Prior to 1967, immigrants in Canada were mostly of European origin. However, the introduction of the "Universal Point System" in 1967 changed the demographic landscape by removing country-based restrictions and focusing on education and skills as the primary criteria for immigration into Canada. Since then, Asians have become the largest immigrant group there. As of the 2021 population survey, people of Indian origin have overtaken their Philippines and Chinese counterparts and nearly one in five immigrants were found to be of Indian origin, the highest from any country. Indians comprise the largest migrant community in Canada and more than 1.7 million people of Indian descent reside in Canada.

7. **Prem K. Budhwar** in his article "**India-Canada Relations: a Roller-Coaster Ride" (2018)** illustrates that India and Canada established their relationship shortly after India gained independence in 1947, with Prime Minister Nehru's visit to Canada in 1949 helping to build a friendly relationship. In the early years of India's independence, Canada assisted India in the field of nuclear technology. As the Cold War started, the relations from mid 1950s resembled a roller coaster ride and Canada started to perceive India as a close ally of the Soviet Union. Then Canada overlooked the fact that America and its Western allies were helping Pakistan, India's arch-rival, in the name of containment of Communism. The blowing up of Air India flight in 1985 and providing shelter to Khalistani separatists and not restraining them in anti-India activities was a further setback to India-Canada relations. Things started looking better when India initiated economic reforms through various liberalization measures. In 1996, then Canada's Prime Minister Jean Chretien, along with a hundred CEOs of various Canadian enterprises visited India to strengthen the bilateral relations. Unfortunately, this smooth flow of development received a major jolt when India conducted five nuclear weapon tests, also known as Pokhran II (Operation Shakti) and formally declared a nuclear state.

8. **Rajiv Bhatia** in his article "**India-Canada Relations - Post-Trudeau Visit: The Road Ahead" (2018)** elucidates that despite having similarities such as liberal democracies, commonwealth connections and strong Indian diaspora factor, Prime Minister Trudeau's visit to India did not turn out to be as anticipated because of Canada's alleged support for Khalistani separatists. Canada, a rich and technologically advanced nation can surely benefit from India's rapidly growing and liberalizing economy. Meanwhile, India, widely known for its Information and Technology sectors can tap into many business opportunities in Canadian cities. The relationship between India and Canada is not just about one issue, it is multidimensional in nature.

9. **Tania Das Gupta and Sugandha Nagpal** in their article entitled "**We Know We Have to Work Like a 'Donkey' in Canada': Employment Expectations and Experiences of Young Punjabis Migrating to Canada" (2024)** state that migration patterns in Canada differ for international students and skilled permanent residents. Via a two-step migration procedure, international students first come to Canada on temporary visas, and then apply for permanent residency (PR) during the post-graduation phase. Skilled immigrants, on the other hand, come directly as permanent residents, based on their skills and financial background. Regardless of gender, students who are migrating to Canada understand that they may have to work in low-paying jobs for some time, but they view this as a transitory phase, as they think Canada can eventually help them achieve economic independence. Along the same lines, skilled migrants negotiate several job options after moving, depending on their family's expectations and their own goals for improving their social status. Each immigrant described how their observations of those who had traveled earlier as well as their own experiences of migrating to other places before arriving in Canada and anecdotes from their networks, had shaped their ideas. They also chose to rely on these networks to get employment and move ahead in getting permanent residency.

10. A report by **The National Foundation for American Policy Analysis (2024)** explored that highly skilled international students have been choosing Canada over the United States of America due to stricter visa norms and it is difficult to gain an American visa as compared to Canada which provides more favorable immigration policies to work, study and live in Canada. As a result, many Indian students preferred to attend Canadian universities rather than American universities and it translated into more Indian students immigrating to Canada. In the last 20 years, the number of Indian students attending Canadian institutions has increased by more than

5,800%, from 2,181 in 2000 to 128,928 in 2021 which translates to a rise of 126,747 individuals.

11. **Agrawal and Lovell (2008)** analyzed Canadian data sources to explore the social, demographic and economic traits of Indian migrants in Canada. In the early 1980s, most of the Indians going to Canada were sponsored by relatives already residing there. Federal Skilled Workers Program (FSWP) also attracted approximately 20% of migrants, which provided economic incentives for skilled workers and about 2% went there through the refugees/ humanitarian stream. Since the 2000s the number of Indians going there rose drastically and people mainly settled in IT, healthcare, and higher studies. The dramatic shift towards highly skilled Indian immigrants was accompanied by an English-focused education system as well as fluency in the English language.

12. **Bhati & Anderson** in their work "**Factors Influencing Indian Students' Choice of Overseas Study Destination" (2012)** illustrate that many Indian students see higher education as an easy way to migrate there. Canada is a popular choice for Indian students because of its strong academic reputation and policies that are friendly to students. Institutions like the University of Toronto & University of British Columbia are one of the best-rated institutions globally and are known for high academic standards and research opportunities. The Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP) and introduction of Express Entry allow international students to gain insight into work experience which can lead to permanent residency pathways.

13. **Walton-Roberts** in his book "**Transnational Geographies: Indian Immigration to Canada" (2003)** found that social connections are a big reason for motivating Indian youth to settle down in Canada. He points out that historical immigration patterns from the Punjab region still shape the migration trends and the large Indian diaspora residing in Canada provides support and encouragement to newcomers. Interviews with the new Indian migrants showed that the desire to move to Canada is largely motivated by strong familial networks.

Problem to be Investigated

The proposed research aims to conduct a policy analysis of Canada's different immigration policies and the impact of Indian migrants on Canadian society. It also seeks to delve into the major factors that influenced thousands of Indians to settle in Canada such as better career prospects and favorable migration policies. The proposed study will also investigate policies such as Express Entry for skilled workers, Family Reunification Programs that facilitate

bringing family members together who have been separated due to migration and Provincial Nominee Programs (PNPs), which provide autonomy to provinces to meet their labor needs or to make policies that attract skilled international workers.

An essential aspect of this research is to address recent issues like the increasing cost of living in Canada, the housing crisis, anti-immigrant sentiments and job issues. By studying these prospects, the proposed research also seeks to simultaneously uncover the underlying reasons for the "Brain drain" from India to Canada and the ease with which Canada can fulfill its labor market requirements.

Objectives of the Investigation and Motivation

The proposed research aims to examine the multifaceted relationship between India and Canada, with special emphasis on the impact of migration on both countries. These are the following objectives of the proposed study:

- To understand the Canadian immigration policy and its impact upon the Indian community
- To examine the role of the Indian diaspora's contribution to Canada's economy and cultural exchange.
- To investigate the impact of Indian migration on Canadian social fabric
- To identify the challenges encountered by the Indian diaspora in Canada.
- To evaluate Canada's tolerance of Separatist groups from India who allegedly pose a direct threat to India's territorial sovereignty.
- To determine how far India's skilled migrants are aligning with the needs of Canada's labor market.

Motivation

The motivation behind this research is to highlight the dynamics of India-Canda relations in its myriad dimensions. Canadian educational institutions benefit from high tuition revenues while Indian students gain by means of getting access to quality education and pathways to permanent residency. It is evident that Canada's approach is influenced by both practical considerations and more general societal principles while deciding their immediate and long-term strategy which essentially factors in migration policies. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, migration and integration will remain a vital force shaping the future of India-

Canada relations.

Research Questions

Here are some possible questions:

- How does the Indian diaspora influence India-Canada relations?
- How do Canadian immigration policies aid the flow of Indian immigrants and enable their access to permanent residency?
- Does the Indian diaspora in Canada face racism and discrimination?
- How has the Khalistan issue continued to strain diplomatic relations and political trust between India and Canada?
- What are the major challenges and opportunities for Indian students pursuing higher education in Canada?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses will be tested in the proposed study:

- Indian migration to Canada is driven by prospects of better career growth, social security and stability.
- Canada's family reunification programs create pathways that make migration more appealing to Indian citizens.
- Cultural pluralism supported by Canada's inclusive policies renders Indian migrants to be more acceptable in Canada.

Research Design and Methodology

This proposed research will use both qualitative and quantitative approaches to delve into the complex dynamics of India-Canada relations. To gather relevant data, Purposive Sampling techniques will be used, which involve engaging those with firsthand knowledge or experience of Canada's immigration policies and the Indian diaspora. Policymakers, migration experts, and diaspora members are important stakeholders. By focusing on these specific groups, the research will ensure that the data gathered closely reflects the study's goals.

This research will also incorporate a comparative analysis to assess migration policies and trends with other major migrant destination countries. This approach seeks to highlight the distinctive

features of Canada's policies such as their inclusivity and adaptability in the context of cultural diversity that make Canada more appealing to Indian migrants.

A thorough review of existing scholarly articles, news items, weekly magazines and journals related to migration will be included in the data set for content analysis. The qualitative tools will be used to gain insights into the diaspora's experiences, perspectives, opinions, conduct and behavioral patterns. Interviews and case studies will provide an in-depth analysis of the specific topic, and it would be beneficial for studies on social and cultural issues. Quantitative methods will be used to collect and analyze numerical databases, and it will help us to analyze recent trends in migration and the size of the diaspora.

Sources of Data and Tools to Be Used in The Collection of Data

The proposed research will be based on both primary sources and secondary sources. All the relevant material on relations between India and Canada especially pertaining to migration and the Indian diaspora in Canada will be analyzed and interpreted for a better understanding of the topic. The sources will include government reports, OECD migration data and World Bank reports on labor. For analysis of data, tools such as pie charts, bar graphs and tables shall be used. Comparative analysis with special reference to migration trends, assessment of economic relations and trade linkages, and examination of various dimensions of cultural diplomacy shall be conducted. A structured questionnaire shall be prepared, and answers shall be obtained via Google Forms where rating scales and multiple-choice questions shall be provided. Interviews of various stakeholders shall be conducted either face-to-face or through video calls in order to gain insight into the person's thoughts, opinions and understanding. The case study of the Indian diaspora living in Canada will highlight the Indian diaspora's contribution to Canadian society and its cultural salience and political influence. This case study will also highlight and examine the experiences of Indian students in finding employment and integrating into the Canadian workforce.

Analysis of data

The proposed research will utilize both qualitative and quantitative research techniques for data analysis so that a nuanced understanding of the subject matter can be developed. It will focus on understanding the correlation between Canada's immigration policies and migration patterns

from India. Statistical data from available official reports related to migration and citizenship from governmental databases of both countries will be analyzed. Migration data from European countries, the United States and Australia will be compared to highlight the liberal immigration policies of Canada. This comparison will help to identify the factors that set Canada apart from other foreign destinations from the standpoint of Indian students and skilled workers.

Significance of Study

Migration is very common among Indian youth, especially among those who seek better employment opportunities in foreign countries. Due to the increase in the Indian population and resource crunch, more emphasis is placed on employment in the non-agriculture sector which propels migration to foreign lands. In this respect, Canada emerged as one of the most preferred destinations for Indian students. The proposed study aims to explore the reasons behind this trend, particularly in response to youth migration from the states of Punjab, Haryana, and Gujarat. The proposed study also seeks to examine the socio-economic background, the determinants that lead to migration, the nature of employment and income provided, consumption patterns and remittances made by the Indian diaspora.

Its relevance to the present-day problem and needs to society

There is a pressing need for the Indian government to stimulate the Indian economy, create job opportunities, solve the agrarian crisis and formulate a comprehensive policy for the overall development of the country. As the planet becomes warmer than before, extreme weather phenomena like droughts, floods and storms shall become more intense and fatal. These events can lead to an agrarian crisis and destroy livelihoods, which could force more people to migrate. Canada, a champion in green technology and renewable energy could help India to mitigate the issues of climate change. Sustainable development can serve as a model for international cooperation between these two countries. The proposed research aims to make a significant contribution to addressing policy challenges. It intends to guide Indian policymakers to cooperate with Canada in areas like cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and digital innovation to address emerging global problems like cybercrime, online hate crime and misinformation that is likely to have an impact upon Indo-Canada relations in general.

Contribution to the Existing Knowledge

The proposed research work on India-Canada relations shall make a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge across several domains. It shall seek to enrich the discipline of Diaspora Studies, International Relations and Public Policy. The primary contribution of the research lies in exploring the evolution of diplomatic ties between India and Canada, from a shared legacy of British colonialism to present-day challenges.

Future work

The recent diplomatic friction between India and Canada has cast a shadow over their bilateral relations, significantly impacting the issue of migration. However, the deep-rooted cultural and historical ties between the two nations, coupled with significant economic and social benefits, suggest that there is still much unutilized potential for future research and cooperation. As Canada continues to receive thousands of Indian students each year, who make up the largest portion of immigrants, there will be more growing concern about employment opportunities. This research also aims to underline the emerging trends that rapid population growth due to immigration is placing much pressure on public services like healthcare. As a result, the Canadian government may consider restricting the intake of future immigrants, including international students. The proposed research can provide a deeper understanding of India-Canada relations by exploring these areas.

Tentative Chapters

Introduction

Chapter 1: Historical Context of Indian Migration to Canada

Chapter 2: Impact of Indian Immigration on Indo-Canadian Economic Partnership

Chapter 3: Cultural Impact of Indian Immigrants on Canadian Social Fabric

Chapter 4: Prospects of Higher Education for Indian Students in Canada

Chapter 5: Political and Diplomatic Standoff Impacting Indo-Canada Relations

Chapter 6: Future of Indo-Canada relations

Conclusion

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